

Learning to Thrive

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By the time you read this, we will be approaching the final few business weeks of the year. For many, this heralds a time of getting the final bits of business done to achieve calendar year targets. It is also a period of reflection, and a period of looking forward to a new year, to new goals, to new challenges and to new opportunities.

We know that the evolution of the strongest businesses is about survival of the most adaptable. And it is noticeable that the most successful business people have developed a way of habitually (and constantly) looking at their progress and seeing where that puts them against where they want to be. This ability to instantly see where their business is, and where they are heading creates an adaptability to change, an eye for new opportunities, and the ability to constantly monitor progress, and seek improvement.

Like so many of those traits which make up success, it becomes a matter of habit. And like any habit, we can all learn it.

I call this habit “Learning to Thrive”. Because only those businesses and business people who adapt to constant change will thrive. And like when you learn to drive, learning to thrive can at first feel uncomfortable. We all remember the term that the driving instructor used to help us learn ... Mirror, Signal, Manoeuvre. And we all remember that feeling the first time we had to negotiate a roundabout...
Mirror Signal Manoeuvre

Learning to thrive is the same.

And I rather like to use the same MSM mnemonic. Here’s how it works:

M is for Mirror

Look in the mirror and what do you see? Are you truly happy with where you are in terms of professional performance, in terms of your business development and in terms of achieving your personal goals? Of course, this step rather presumes that you do have goals in these areas, and that you do have a Vision of where you want your business to be.

In the short term, where are you in relation to this year’s targets and goals?

S is for Signal

What does this signal about where you are heading? And is that in line with where you want to be, both in terms of your business and for you personally? Are you on track, or have you been marking time? Someone once commented that although they had been in financial services 15 years, they felt that they had simply repeated the first year fifteen times!

So what you see in the mirror when you look at your business and yourself? And what does that signal about the way you are doing it? Comparing that with where you want to be will signal to you whether or not you need to Manoeuvre...

M is for Manoeuvre

This is not about just saying that in future you will try to do things just a little better, or a little more of the same. It's about taking prompt, early, decisive action which clearly indicates you are moving forward and making 2005 a very different year. It's about how you are adapting to the changes all around and using them to your advantage. It's about how you are setting goals which stretch you way beyond where you currently are, and it's about having a clear strategy of how to get there... both professionally and personally.

In the short term, what action can you take to turn a good current year into a great one, or a great one into an even greater one? In the remaining weeks what can you do to make a big finish? I call this a December Project... a campaign to finish in real style.

In addition, what can you do towards the end of this year in order to set up 2005? For example, if you are developing a new market which you are going to move into significantly in 2005 (eg. getting into the corporate or business market), what can be done to give you a good start? What structural changes need to be made in your business to set yourself up properly for this?

For this Manoeuvring, consider not just Achievement Goals and business targets, but also Regime Goals (new habits to develop to aid self improvement) and Performance Goals (improvements in professional skills... eg improving the quality of your meetings, improving your presentation skills, etc).

With regard to regimes, it always amazes me to think that so many people wait until the New Year to set out their resolutions. If something's worth improving, why wait? If you can do it now, in the flurry of activity until the end of the year, that proves you can do it anytime!

After years behind the wheel, when we now drive, we are constantly MSM'ing (often without consciously noticing it). The same happens in terms of Learning to Thrive. Over time, we can develop the habit of constantly looking in the Mirror and seeing where we are taking our business, and what that signals, and what we need to do to manoeuvre back on track. At first, however, it must be a conscious MSM, just like the first few times you did it in the car.

I love those moments at my seminars, when having laid out the plans for the future, I ask the delegates the "serious" question. For those who are serious about being successful, I can see it in their eyes... and if they look in a mirror they know too. For those who are not deadly serious, I can tell, and so can they. Yet, so many shy away from the Mirror, and shy away from what their reflection would Signal, and therefore don't Manoeuvre to change.

Go on, find a mirror...

Until next time, wishing you every success...